

OFFICE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION
STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

JANUARY 7, 2009
10:30 AM

CROWN PLAZA/ACADIANA HOTEL
VERMILION ROOM
1801 WEST PINHOOK ROAD
LAFAYETTE, LA 70508

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The regular monthly Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Guillory at 10:30 A.M.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Brad Spicer.

Members present: Chairman George Guillory, Randell Fletcher, Earl Garber, Ed Yerger, Garland Colvin, and John Compton

Members absent: Dr. Paul Coreil, LSU

A quorum was present.

Others present: Kevin Norton, NRCS; Brad Spicer, LDAF; Joey Breaux, LDAF

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Guillory called for a motion to approve the December 15, 2008 minutes of the State Commission.

Motion: Mr. Fletcher made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 15, 2008 Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Garber and passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

District FY 2007-2008 Audits Update

Chairman Guillory said the first item on the agenda is the status of the FY 2007-2008 district audit and asked Mr. Spicer to brief the Commission. Mr. Spicer said they still have about eight district audits to complete in the group that have operating budgets of less than \$200,000. He said all the work is completed for the five districts with operating budgets of \$200,000 or more. Mr. Spicer said all audits will be forwarded to the Legislative Auditor's Office by the end of January. He said that he, as well as the two audit firms, has been in contact with the Legislative Auditor's Office, keeping them informed of our progress. Mr. Spicer said now that they have a plan in place they will not have the same delay in conducting the audits next fiscal year.

NACD Annual Meeting

Chairman Guillory asked Mr. Garber to brief the Commission on the planning activities being carried out by LACD in preparation for the New Orleans meeting. Mr. Garber said that the planning for the February meeting is on schedule. He said that they have put together a great program and encouraged district supervisors to make an effort to attend the meeting. Mr. Garber said that in addition to a great group of speakers lined up for the general sessions and the break out sessions, they are also going to conduct two tours on Wednesday afternoon. He

said on one tour participants will visit areas in St. Bernard Parish that were devastated by Hurricane Katrina, including EWP project sites. He said this tour will also include traveling to areas of the Mississippi Gulf Coast that were also hit by Katrina. Mr. Garber said the second tour will include structures on the Mississippi River. He said they will visit the Davis Pond Freshwater Control structure and the Bonnet Carrie Spillway Flood Control structure just north of New Orleans. He said the tours will start at noon and end back at the hotel about 5:00 PM.

LACD Annual Meeting

Chairman Guillory said that the LACD Annual Meeting will start here at the Crown Plaza/Acadiana Hotel this afternoon and will end Friday at noon. He said it is his understanding that over one hundred supervisors plan to attend the break out sessions. He said that any two-hour combination of sessions will count toward the State Commission's mandatory supervisors' training requirement. Mr. Garber said as a result of increased supervisor and NRCS staff attendance they will have nearly three hundred in attendance. He said this is by far the largest number of attendees at any LACD Annual Meeting in many years, dating back to the early 1990's. Mr. Garber said that again they have a great program planned and are looking forward to everyone gaining knowledge that can assist them back in the individual districts and at the same time enjoy the entertainment and the fellowship with other participants. He said in addition to changing the Standing Committee meeting formats they have also added to the program the Louisiana Master Farmer Certification Luncheon.

Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement

Chairman Guillory said the next item on the agenda is the Farm Bill Report. He said that Mr. Spicer had contacted several districts to make sure that they will be able to earn their current allocation and to determine if they can use additional Farm Bill funds. Mr. Spicer said that he will be working with the NRCS and districts on allocating additional funds within the next two weeks. He said that there will be nearly forty-five thousand dollars in new Farm Bill funds being allocated under an amendment to the current NRCS cooperative agreement that will end on March 31, 2009. He said the additional Farm Bill funds will reduce the impact of the pending state funding cuts.

District Insurance Packages

Chairman Guillory said that the State Commission selected the Turrentine Insurance Agency at the last meeting for all three district insurance coverages, which includes Workers Compensation, Directors and Officer Liability and Hired and Non-Owned Auto Liability Insurances. Mr. Spicer said that policies have been purchased and the new policies will run thru mid December of this year. He said the new coverage for FY 2008-2009 is nearly ten thousand dollars less than for the same coverage last fiscal year.

NEW BUSINESS

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Chairman Guillory asked Mr. Norton to give the NRCS State Conservationist Report.

Mr. Norton handed out copies of his printed report. Mr. Norton said that NRCS has been very busy working on the NRCS audit response and have gleaned every detail from ongoing contracts and other open obligations amounting to \$56 million. He said that about \$5 million of this has been de-obligated, and about \$3 million of this will be re-obligated, so \$2 million out of \$56 million were cleaned up on the books. He said this was definitely a good house cleaning exercise to get through, but the timing was very unfortunate, leading to statewide staff working through the holidays. He said that when contract funds are obligated in the future, there are some things that will now be well understood that can be addressed early on with less need to revisit customers. Mr. Norton said they are still waiting on the final and interim farm bill regulations to be published, and that when they are published there will be a simultaneous

release of the new manuals and that NRCS is ready to move once the rules are final. He said because of the late delivery of these rules, applications and re-obligations will likely go into April and May. He said that the NRCS allocations will be close to what they have been with the WRP allocation being considerably larger than last year with a goal of 14,000 acres to enroll through that program in LA. He said some parishes that have been the epicenter of WRP activity have reached the WRP/CRP parish cap, so they will be busy trying to encourage participation in other areas. Mr. Norton was asked if it was so that EQIP would not be ready until May. He responded that he is expecting the rules to be published in the latter part of this month or early February, and that the field offices will be doing EQIP work next month, but it will likely be April/May before all the EQIP dollars are obligated and get this year's worth of contract development behind us. It was mentioned that this should be done before farmers begin planting their crops, and Mr. Norton agreed and said that on a normal schedule the contract funds would have been obligated by now, but with the farm bill being passed so late and rule making still in the works, they're being held back. Mr. Norton said that the cooperative agreement with districts should be about the same amount this year as last year, but some of this will depend upon the continuing resolution which ends in early March. He said that if Washington develops a permanent continuing resolution, we will be held to last years funding, but if NRCS is given all the funds the farm bill offers, the cooperative agreement with districts may be increased to some degree; as of now, for all practical purposes the continuing resolution will contain about the same amount of funds as last year. Mr. Norton said that the STAC revisions have been commented on and there should be a meeting of the NRCS, OSWC and SWCC to develop a training for the DC,s and at least one supervisor and employee for each district to finalize just how the local work groups will function. He said that this commission stated that it believes SWCDs should rightfully chair the LWGs and NRCS agrees, but we must all be exactly sure of how this business will be conducted. He said it should not be a dramatic change from they way the LWGs were conducted this past year, but there are requirements on meeting membership, advertisement and invitations, especially now that membership will include local private entities. Mr. Garber said that there would be a breakout session at the NACD meeting on this topic and every supervisor should plan to attend this session.

Mr. Norton said this concluded his report.

Correspondence

Chairman Guillory said there was no correspondence.

Resignation/Appointments and Reappointments

Mr. Spicer said there were no resignations.

Mr. Spicer said the Avoyelles SWCD is the only district requesting the State Commission to act on appointing a supervisor.

Avoyelles SWCD is requesting Ms. Janet D. Gros be appointed to fill the unexpired elected position of Mr. Charles Louis Gros. Term will begin January 7, 2009 and will expire on June 30, 2011.

Motion: Mr. Yerger made a motion to approve the appointment of Ms. Janet D. Gros, elected position, Avoyelles SWCD. The motion was seconded by Mr. Compton and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Guillory asked if there was any other business to come before the Commission and there was none.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Guillory said the next Commission Meeting is scheduled for 1:15 PM on Tuesday, February 17, in the Veteran's Memorial Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Guillory asked if there was any other business or comments. None replied.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Guillory said if there was no other business that he will accept a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Mr. Colvin made a motion to adjourn at 11:45 A.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ George Guillory_____

George Guillory, Chairman